

In the claims

1. (Currently amended) An apparatus comprising:
_____an electronic camera to produce an image signal[.];
_____a first user operable control to selectively activate the electronic camera to take pictures;
[[and]]
_____ a second user operable control to receive an input from a user and to generate, in response to the input from the user, a saliency signal to indicate user interest in a picture, the saliency signal to have at least one of (a) a value selected from at least three different discrete; or (b) a value selected from a continuous range of values[.];
_____ a circuit to record the value of the saliency signal based on the input received via the second control contemporaneously with activation of the first control[.]; and,
_____a memory arranged to store the image signal and the saliency signal,
_____wherein at least one operation of the apparatus is controlled based on the saliency signal, the at least one operation being different from recording the value of the saliency signal in the memory,
_____and wherein the at least one operation comprises automatically activating the electronic camera, without user interaction, to produce the image signal, the image signal representing a still digital photograph.
2. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising compression circuitry to compress the image signal to an extent determined by the saliency signal.
3. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a buffer to receive the image signal, the buffer having a capacity controlled by the value of the saliency signal.

4. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising image selection circuitry to receive the saliency and image signals and to selectively pass the image signal based on the saliency signal.

5. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising management circuitry to selectively retain in the memory images associated with higher saliency levels in preference to images with lower saliency levels.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising management circuitry selectively retain in the memory images associated with higher saliency levels in preference to images with lower saliency levels.

8-10. (Cancelled)

11. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the first user control includes a normal picture taking control on the electronic camera.

12. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the saliency signal is a first saliency signal and further comprising a third user operable control to generate a second saliency signal.

13. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 12, further comprising saliency circuitry to combine the first and second saliency signals to form a complex saliency

signal, the complex saliency signal being the saliency signal to control the at least one operation and the saliency signal stored by the memory.

14. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the saliency signal is a first saliency signal and further comprising saliency circuitry to generate an image related saliency signal in response to the image signal.

15. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising saliency circuitry to combine the first saliency signal and the image related saliency signal to form a complex saliency signal, the complex saliency signal being the saliency signal to control the at least one operation and the saliency signal stored by the memory.

16. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, further including circuitry to incorporate the saliency signal in the image signal.

17. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the second user control is part of the body of the electric camera or is physically attached to the body of the electronic camera.

18. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the second user control is a remote control for communicating with the electronic camera.

19. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the second user control comprises a physically movable control member and a sensor arranged to be responsive to movement of the control member.

20. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the second user control comprises a pressure or force sensing transducer to determine the value of the saliency signal.

21.-39. (Cancelled)

40. (Currently amended) An imaging system comprising:
_____an electronic camera to produce an image signal[[],];
_____at least two physically or mechanically operable user controls, the user controls being arranged to receive a respective input from a user and to generate first and second saliency signals, respectively, while the image signal is being produced[[],]; [[and]]
_____saliency circuitry to combine said first and second saliency signals to form a composite saliency signal, at least one of the saliency signals having at least one of (a) a value selected from at least three different discrete values, or (b) a value selected from a continuous range of values[[],]; and,
_____a memory to store the image signal in place of a stored image when the value of the saliency signal is greater than a value of a second saliency signal associated with the stored image and the memory is full.

41. (Cancelled)

42. (Previously presented) An imaging system according to claim 40, further comprising a third user operable control to selectively activate the electronic camera to take pictures.

43. (Cancelled)

44. (Currently amended) An imaging system comprising:
_____an electronic camera to produce an image signal representative of a viewed scene[.];
_____a physically or mechanically operable user control to receive an input from a user and to generate a first saliency signal while the image signal is being produced[.];
_____saliency circuitry to automatically generate an image related second saliency signal in response to the image signal[.]; and,
_____circuitry to combine said first and second saliency signals while the image signal is being produced to provide a composite saliency signal,
_____wherein the first saliency signal, the second saliency signal, and the composite saliency signal are to indicate an amount of user interest in the viewed scene, and the composite saliency signal is to be used to control operation of at least a part of the imaging system,
and wherein the at least one operation comprises automatically activating the electronic camera, without user interaction, to produce the image signal, the image signal representing a still digital photograph.

45. (Cancelled)

46. (Previously presented) An imaging system according to claim 44, further comprising a user operable picture taking control to enable the electronic camera to take pictures.

47. (Previously presented) An imaging system according to claim 44, wherein the first saliency signal is to include more than two values.

48-59. (Cancelled)